



**Cornelius, by the Grace of God and favour of
the Apostolic See, Archbishop of Halifax :**

**To the Clergy, Religious Orders, and Faith of the Diocese ;
Health and Benediction in the Lord.**

DEARLY BELOVED :

So many and such wonderful changes have taken place in the social condition of mankind, during recent years, chiefly by reason of the development of the mechanical arts, that the unthinking are inclined to believe a similar change has been effected in the nature of man, and in the laws which should guide and govern his conduct. Material comforts and conveniences, now within such easy reach of so many, have a tendency to undermine, and eventually destroy, the virility of the human race,—to engender a spirit of resentment against all laws which impose restraints, or are looked upon as inconvenient of observance,—and to render difficult and distasteful the pursuit of virtue through self-denial. The practices of Religion become irksome, and, whilst money may be readily given to help the needy, any act of charity which requires personal labour, or attention, seems repulsive. A false standard of Morality is set up, and sought to be justified, by the plea that it is more

adapted to the "advanced thought" of this age, and to our changed conditions.

We need not waste time discussing the "advanced thought" argument. Any reflecting man who has studied the past, knows that in no age since Christianity began—not even excepting the iron tenth century—has there been relatively less really solid thought, less reflection, which is the basis of intellectual advancement, than in the present one. Superficiality and assurance, which are comically unconscious of their barrenness of thought, superabound, and are the painful characteristics of the end of this century. Charlatans and mountebanks on the platform, or in the pulpit, attempt to expound a Religion, the rudiments of which they do not understand; writers in Reviews, or Magazines, criticize the Bible, of whose genius, and intent, and purpose, they have absolutely no knowledge; whilst would-be scientists, so belated as not to know that evolution, not in its true sense of development within defined limits, but in the false one first attached to it, is a discredited theory, disowned even by its father, will still seek fame, and the glamour of sensationalism, by endeavouring to evoke its almost forgotten shade. This literary froth denotes untrained and vacuous minds just as surely as the specks of foam on a stream mark its shallow stretches. Yet, by many, it is held to be "advanced" or "progressive" thought. A dreadful penalty, surely is this, and yet a fitting one

for those who have repudiated the leadership of the one divinely instituted authority, under whose fostering care to-day, as in the past, the human mind achieves its greatest triumphs, and true criticism finds its most complete sphere of usefulness.

As regards the changed conditions of life, we must remember that there has been no essential change in man's nature, and there can be none in God's message to man. That message was delivered by Christ to His Church once and forever, to be preached to mankind through all ages, and in every state and phase of its earthly career. With God there is no increase of knowledge; for Him there is no wonderful invention, no discovery of a hitherto unknown physical power, or agency. From the beginning the whole panorama of human history, in its most minute details, was before Him; so, too, was mankind with all its aspirations and struggles, its hopes and temptations, its pride, perversity and weakness, as well as its more noble qualities of brotherly love, affection and self-restraint. With a perpetual love He loved this creature so capable of lofty acts of self-renunciation, so prone to debasing ones of self-indulgence. In promulgating a law for man's guidance and safe-guard, and in providing means whereby the grace necessary to enable him to observe it might be obtained, He adapted both the one and the other to the needs, and requirements, and capacities of men in each and all the foreseen vicissitudes of life.

The truths of this law can satisfy the intellect, and console the heart of the most highly trained man of letters, as well as those of the illiterate. As means of grace the Sacraments are as effective in the highest state of civilization, as in its rudest beginning. Just as in the natural order the vast store-house of Nature has an inexhaustible supply of material elements to meet the needs of creation, so in the order of Grace, or in that supernatural state to which we have been raised, there is in the rich treasury confided to the care of the Church, an abundance of whatever is needed for the spiritual light and strength of man in every stage of the world's history. So firmly rooted is this truth in the ground-work of Christianity, that St. Paul could cry out: "But though we, or an Angel from Heaven, preach a Gospel to you beside that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema." (Gal I—8). Not a new Gospel, then, is required to-day, but a better understanding of the old one. From it, and not from crude theories, and unscientific deductions, are we to learn the truths of Revelation; by it, and not by the teaching and example of the worldly minded, should our conduct be moulded.

There is always danger of being led astray by errors prevalent amongst those with whom we associate. St. Paul's warning to the Corinthians should be repeated to-day. The necessity is, perhaps greater, now, on account of the insidious attempt to divorce

Religion from the public life of the community by seeking to introduce a double conscience, or a double standard of right and wrong,—one for private and the other for public life. With St. Paul we say to you: "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners." (I Cor. XI—33). There is but one God, one conscience, one standard of morality for actions public and private, whether as regards individuals, or a whole community. If the aiders and abettors of one who commits a private act of injustice are equally guilty with him, and held in common to restitution, so, too, the aiders and abettors of a public act of injustice, even if it be done by a Parliamentary Statute, participate in the guilt of the principal, and are held with him to make reparation.* "Be not deceived:" to judge of the morality of public acts belongs to the authority established by God to preach and interpret His word. Political expediency, party needs, and private gain, are not the tests by which the justice of an action is to be determined. The immutable principles of natural right, and divine law, are the touchstones by which all action is to be tried. "Evil communications corrupt good manners;" hence it is to be feared that a constant and intimate intercourse with persons imbued with false principles, a frequent reading of papers or magazines in which these false principles are upheld, have obscured in the minds of some well meaning persons the Catholic truths we have set forth, and misled their judgment

"Be not-deceived": we may not always be able to prevent public, or private injustice, but we can & should always abhor, expose and condemn it.

as to their significance. To these I would say with the Apostle, "Awake, ye just, and sin not." (I Cor. XII—34). Yes; let us awake to the danger of our surroundings, and putting on the armour of truth and taking the shield of Faith, let us stand ready to resist the assaults of the "most evil one," who in various ways is endeavouring to weaken and corrupt our Holy Faith.

The Season of Lent invites us to this by reminding us of all the love of our dear Lord for us, and of His admonition to "watch and pray." It also brings to our minds the humiliations so cheerfully accepted by our Saviour, that he might do the will of His Heavenly Father. These considerations should inflame our hearts with love for our Crucified Redeemer, should make us watchful lest we be led astray by false maxims, or by a mistaken conception of our duties, and finally, should give us that true Christian courage which dares to do right undeterred by friend or foe, and which glories in obeying God rather than man, the Church rather than the world. In this time of special prayer and reflection look to the future, not to the present—to the enduring years of Eternity rather than the fleeting ones of life. Then will the advice of the Apostle be seen to be the highest wisdom: "Be not conformed to this world, but be reformed in the newness of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and the perfect will of God." (Rom. XII—2.) Yes, the "perfect will of

God," and not our own is what we should seek to do in imitation of our suffering Saviour who prayed to His Father—"not my will, but thine be done." (Luke, XXII—42.)

"Be not conformed to the world," in the manner of observing Lent, but enter into the penitential spirit of the time by denying yourselves, for instance in drink and in unnecessary, or noisy amusements, and by making a sincere and humble confession.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus be with you all, Brethern.

The regulations for Lent are the same as last year.

This pastoral shall be read in every Church of the Diocese on the first Sunday after its reception that the Pastor officiates therein.

✠ C. O'BRIEN,

Archbishop of Halifax.

HALIFAX.

Feast of the Chair of St. Peter at Antioch,
1897.